



KIDS MATTER:

IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN IN WASHINGTON STATE



A framework for building an early childhood system in Washington State

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT: Lorrie Grevstad, Department Of Health, Washington State, lorrie.grevstad@doh.wa.gov
Sangree Froelicher, Head Start-State Collaboration Office, The Build Initiative, froelsm@dshs.wa.gov
Garrison Kurtz, Foundation for Early Learning, The Build Initiative, garrison@earlylearning.org



TABLE OF CONTENTS



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

iii


FULL REPORT:

I.	GOALS AND GUIDANCE	1
	A. Mission	1
	B. Vision	1
	C. Guiding Principles	2
	D. Pillars of the Plan	3
II.	PLAN DEVELOPMENT	5
	A. The Development Process	5
	B. Assumptions and Intentions	10
III.	ASSESSMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD ENVIRONMENT	13
	Needs Assessment/Environmental Scan	13
IV.	STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN	23
	A. Logic Model	24
	B. Resources	26
	C. Strategies/Action Areas	29
V.	EVALUATION PLAN	37
	A. Level 1. Implementing of the Strategic Plan	38
	B. Level 2. Systems Change Level	39
	C. Level 3. Child and Family Outcomes	40
VI.	FINANCING AND SUSTAINABILITY	45
VII.	HOW TO USE THE KIDS MATTER PLAN	47
VIII.	CONCLUSION	49





INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Kids Matter is a collaborative and comprehensive strategic framework for building the early childhood system in Washington State in order to improve outcomes for children. The current reality is that services, policies and systems that serve young children are inadequate to meet the needs of children and families. This plan offers a framework that supports the efforts of local and state stakeholders to coordinate, collaborate and integrate efforts that will lead to children being healthy and ready for school. This plan identifies specific achievable outcomes within four goal areas: **access to health insurance and medical homes; mental health and social-emotional development; early care and education/ child care and parenting information and support.** Cutting across and integrated within each of these is a family support approach to achieving outcomes within the four goal areas. 

Kids Matter was developed with the participation of early childhood stakeholders at the community, local and state levels. Three system-building initiatives, the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems grant in the Department of Health, the Build Initiative and the Head Start–State Collaboration Office, are committed to supporting and guiding its implementation, so that it becomes a living, active plan in Washington State. Kids Matter belongs to all interested stakeholder groups and organizations who believe that working collaboratively toward common goals and outcomes will lead to greater success than is possible by working alone. It is intended to guide the actions of public and private stakeholders at the community, local and state levels.


HALLMARKS OF THE PLAN

- Approaches early childhood systems as a collaborative effort
- Serves as an over-arching bridge for a comprehensive and integrated framework
- Defines common goals and outcomes
- Outlines specific strategies and partners
- Focuses on accountability and evaluation of progress

INTENTIONS OF THE PLAN

Rather than being a detailed list of all work on behalf of young children, The Plan assumes that state and local agencies and communities are pursuing their specific missions and priority goals. The plan builds upon existing and emerging efforts and identifies opportunities for working together in more strategic, integrated and collaborative ways toward commonly-agreed upon outcomes.

By offering a common vision, opportunity for integration, defined high priority common outcomes and a way to assess progress, partners in early childhood efforts can collectively change the health, well-being and school readiness of children in Washington State

 Rather than a specific program or service, Family Support describes an overall approach to strengthening and empowering families and communities to foster the optimal development of all family members. Ideally, Family Support principles and approaches would guide every aspect of service provision and decision-making in an early childhood system. Therefore, aspects of Family Support appear as resources such as the guiding principals, communications with parents and parent leadership, in strategies like those that increase practitioner's family support skills or increase families' access to needed resources as well as in outcomes that demonstrate the belief that a system which supports and strengthens the knowledge, skills and resources of families is a system that promotes the optimal development of young children.



A FRAMEWORK FOR BUILDING THE EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM IN WASHINGTON STATE



MISSION

The Kids Matter Plan focuses efforts to create sustainable, integrated and accessible early childhood pathways so that parents, caregivers and communities throughout Washington State have the information, support and services they need to help young children achieve their greatest potential.

KIDS MATTER WAS DEVELOPED UNDER THE FOLLOWING TENETS:

- Joint systems-building efforts built upon existing work
- Cross-system state agency participation
- Participatory community input from a broad constituency to prioritize and intentionally rank outcomes

SO THAT as a state we could develop a framework (i.e., Kids Matter) with prioritized outcomes for systems serving children and families.

EARLY LEARNING OCCURS IN THE CONTEXT OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY, ENCOMPASSING:

- Physical Health and Access to Comprehensive Health Care
- Social-Emotional Development and Mental Health
- Early Care and Education/ Child Care
- Parenting Information and Support

👤 A commitment to Family Support principles and approaches cuts across each of these contexts.

SYSTEM STRENGTHS AND GAPS

Strengths in the system include:

- Progress in increasing access to health care and medical homes for children and families
- Powerful resources and promising local initiatives addressing mental health and social/emotional development
- Washington Early Learning and Development Benchmarks
- The movement toward linkages between early childhood education and K-12
- The Early Learning Council
- Numerous local agendas around school readiness
- Commitment to the concepts of Family Support and programs devoted to or significantly incorporating Family Support

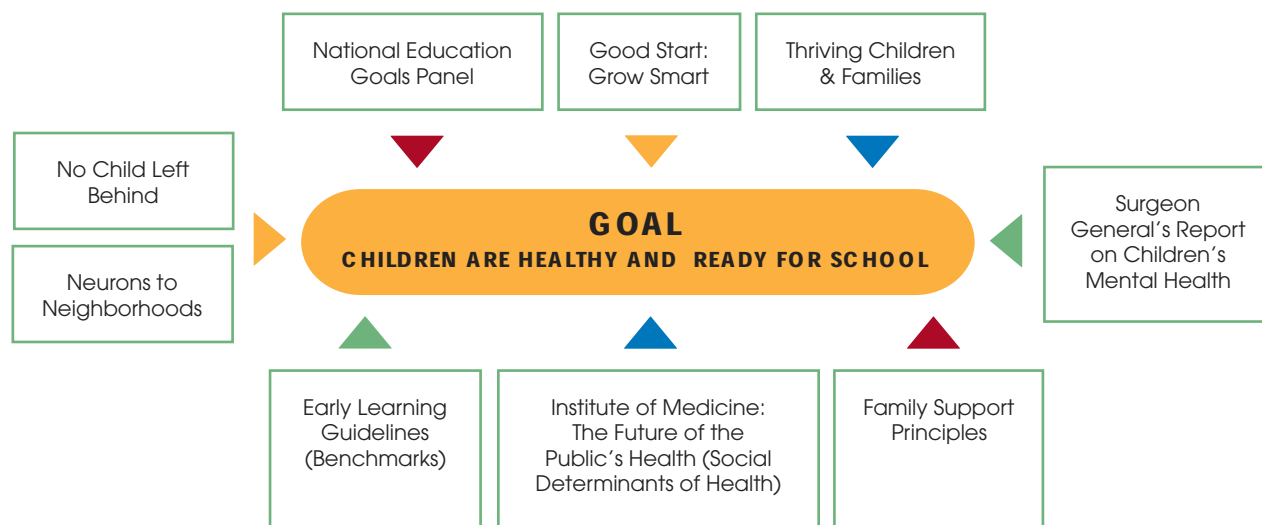
Four overarching system gaps have been identified in Washington State:

- Fragmentation—multiple, separate systems
- Funding gaps
- Challenges to focused policy guidance and decisionmaking
- Lack of public understanding of the importance of early childhood and early childhood services

The Kids Matter Plan is a tool to bring together people and organizations with common goals; to reduce fragmentation of systems and services; to provide clear, prioritized policy guidance to decision-makers and to contribute to programs, services, schools and communities so that:

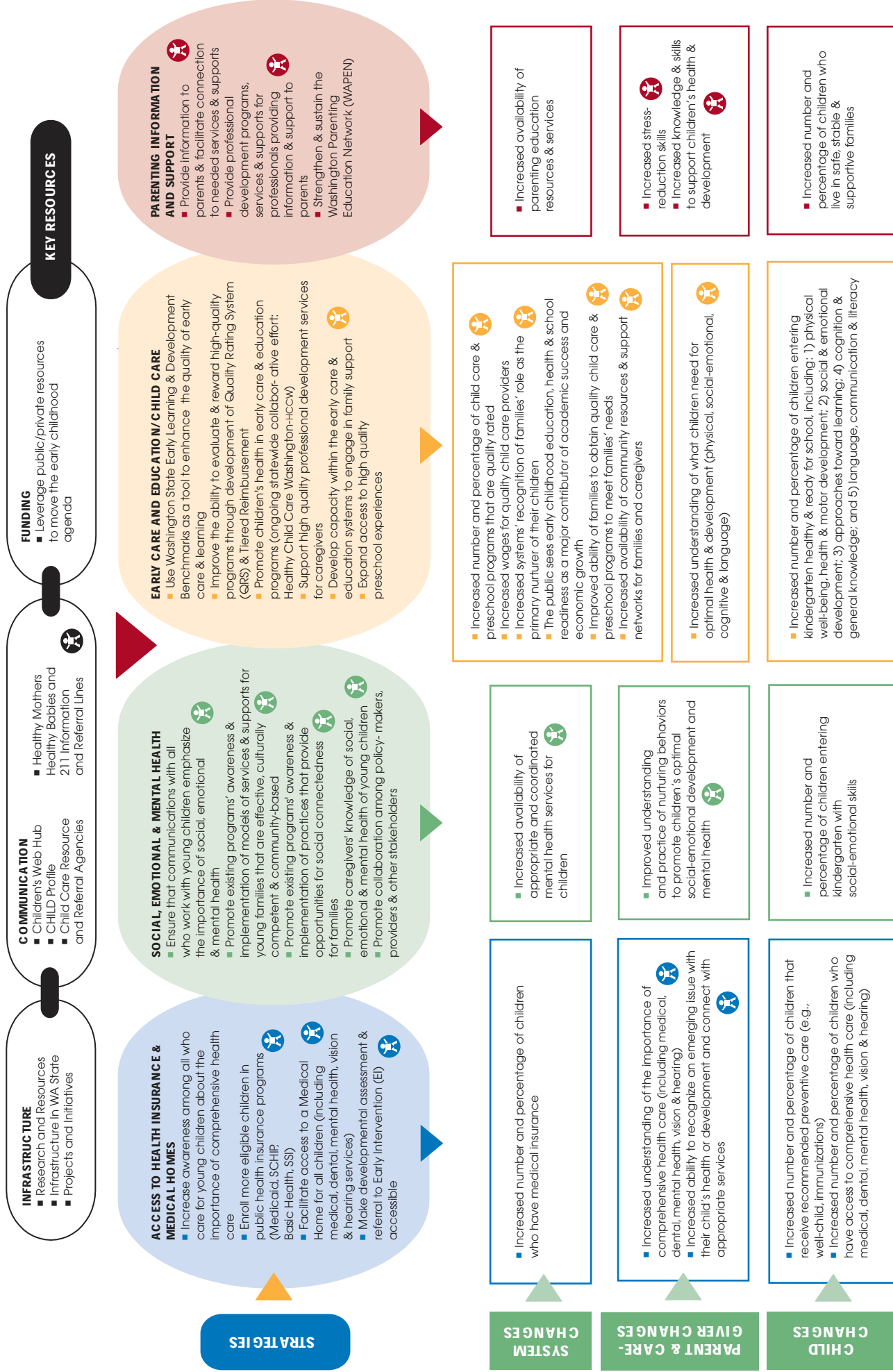
GOAL:
CHILDREN ARE HEALTHY AND READY FOR SCHOOL

KIDS MATTER: PILLARS OF THE PLAN



While the Kids Matter framework is stakeholder driven, it is also grounded in national and state level research-based information which guides its Theory of Change. The Plan embraces best practices in early childhood systems building, service and program coordination and integration, and specific programmatic areas and practices using them to guide the implementation of The Plan. Kids Matter refers to this work as the “Pillars of the Plan.” This theoretical framework is the backdrop for the systems building, collaboration and integration efforts.

KIDS MATTER FRAMEWORK



KIDS MATTER: IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN IN WASHINGTON STATE



ACCESS TO HEALTH INSURANCE AND MEDICAL HOMES

- PARENT & CAREGIVER**
- Increased understanding of the importance of comprehensive health care (including medical, dental, mental health, vision & hearing)
 - Increased ability to recognize an emerging issue with their child's health or development & connect with appropriate services
- SYSTEM**
- Increased number and percentage of children who have medical insurance
- CHILD CHANGES**
- Increased number & percentage of children who receive recommended preventive care (e.g., well-child, immunizations)
 - Increased number and percentage of children who have access to comprehensive health care (including medical, dental, mental health, vision & hearing)

STRATEGIES

- **Increase awareness** among all who care for young children about the importance of comprehensive health care
- **Enroll more eligible children** in public health insurance programs (Medicaid, SCHIP Basic Health, SSI)
- **Facilitate access to a Medical Home** for all children (including medical, dental, mental health, vision & hearing services)
- **Make developmental assessment and referral to Early Intervention (EI) accessible**
- **Develop, promote and implement policies** that will advance Kids Matter Strategies and Outcomes

RESOURCES

- SYSTEM BUILDING INITIATIVES**
- ECCS Grant – Dept of Health
 - BUILD Initiative
 - Head Start – State Collaboration Office
- PARTICIPATING SYSTEMS**
- State & Local Government Partners
 - Coalitions & Associations
 - Foundations and other private funders
- INFRASTRUCTURE**
- Research and Resources
 - Governance in Washington State
 - Projects and Initiatives
- COMMUNICATION**
- Children's Web Hub
 - Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies and 211 Information and Referral Lines
 - CHILd Profile
 - Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies
- PARENT LEADERSHIP**
- Parent leadership is an essential part of high quality services and systems. The goal is to promote this resource for system and/or specific strategies.
- GUIDING PRINCIPLES**
- Be child-focused and family-centered
 - Recognize that families are children's primary teachers
 - Interact with consideration and respect
 - Be flexible & responsive
 - Build on strengths
 - Provide high quality services
 - Use evaluation to inform decisions
- FUNDING**
- Leverage public/private resources to move access to health insurance and medical homes forward

KIDS MATTER: IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN IN WASHINGTON STATE



SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND MENTAL HEALTH

- PARENT & CAREGIVER**
- Improved understanding and practice of nurturing behaviors to promote children's optimal social-emotional development and mental health
- SYSTEM**
- Increased availability of appropriate and coordinated mental health services for children
- CHILD CHANGES**
- Increased number and percentage of children entering kindergarten with social/emotional skills

STRATEGIES

- Ensure that communications with all who work with young children **emphasize the importance of** social, emotional and mental health
- Promote existing programs' awareness and implementation of models of services and supports for young families that are **effective, culturally competent and community-based**
- Promote existing programs' awareness and implementation of practices that **provide opportunities for social connectedness** for families
- Promote **caregivers' knowledge of** social, emotional and mental health of young children
- **Promote collaboration** among policymakers, providers and other stakeholders
- **Develop, promote and implement policies** that will advance Kids Matter strategies and outcomes

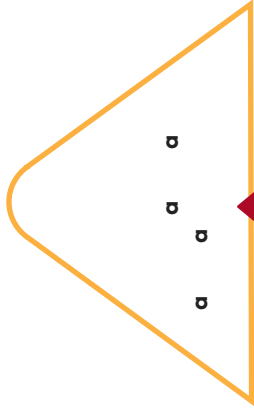
RESOURCES

- SYSTEM BUILDING INITIATIVES**
- ECCS Grant – Dept of Health
 - BUILD Initiative
 - Head Start – State Collaboration Office
- PARTICIPATING SYSTEMS**
- State & Local Government Partners
 - Coalitions & Associations
 - Foundations and other private funders
- INFRASTRUCTURE**
- Research and Resources
 - Governance in Washington State
 - Projects and Initiatives
- COMMUNICATION**
- Children's Web Hub
 - Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies and 211 Information and Referral Lines
 - CHILD Profile
 - Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies
- PARENT LEADERSHIP**
- Parent leadership is an essential part of high quality services and systems. The goal is to promote this resource for system and/or specific strategies.
- GUIDING PRINCIPLES**
- Be child-focused and family-centered
 - Recognize that families are children's primary teachers
 - Interact with consideration and respect
 - Be flexible & responsive
 - Build on strengths
 - Provide high quality services
 - Use evaluation to inform decisions
- FUNDING**
- Leverage public/private resources to promote positive social, emotional and mental health

Family Support approach, strategy, or outcome

KIDS MATTER: IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN IN WASHINGTON STATE

EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION / CHILD CARE



- Increased understanding of what children need for optimal health and development (physical, social-emotional, cognitive & language)
- Increased number & percentage of child care & preschool programs that are quality rated
- Increased wages for quality child care providers
- Increased systems' recognition of families' role as the primary nurturers of their children
- The public sees early childhood education, health & school readiness as a major contributor of academic success and economic growth
- Improved ability of families to obtain quality child care
- & preschool programs that meet families' needs
- Increased availability of community resources
- & support networks for families and caregivers
- Increased number and percentage of children entering kindergarten healthy & ready for school, including: 1) physical wellbeing, health & motor development, 2) social & emotional development, 3) approaches toward learning, 4) cognition & general knowledge, & 5) language, communication & literacy



- **a a g** as a tool to enhance the quality of child care and early learning
- **a a g a a g a** through development of Quality Rating System (QRS) and Tiered Reimbursement
- **a a** in early care and education programs (Ongoing statewide collaborative effort: Healthy Child Care Washington - HCCW)
- **a** opportunities for caregivers
- **a a** within the early care and education systems to engage in family support
- **a** to high quality preschool experiences
- **a** that will advance Kids Matter strategies and outcomes



- ECCS Grant - Dept of Health
- BUILD Initiative
- Head Start - State Collaboration Office
- State & Local Government Partners
- Coalitions & Associations
- Foundations and other private funders
- Research and Resources
- Governance in Washington State
- Projects and Initiatives
- Children's Web Hub
- Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies and 211 Information and Referral Lines
- CHILD Profile
- Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies
- Parent leadership is an essential part of high quality services and systems. The goal is to promote this resource for system and/or specific strategies.
- Be child-focused and family-centered
- Recognize that families are children's primary teachers
- Interact with consideration and respect
- Be flexible & responsive
- Build on strengths
- Provide high quality services
- Use evaluation to inform decisions
- Leverage public/private resources to move Early Care and Education forward
- New Governor's Early Learning Council will make funding recommendations
- Legislature approved funding quality-rated and tiered reimbursement pilots, with statewide options

Family Support approach, strategy, or outcome

KIDS MATTER: IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN IN WASHINGTON STATE

PARENTING INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

GOAL
Children are healthy and ready for school

OUTCOMES

- PARENT & CAREGIVER**
 - Increased stress-reduction skills
 - Increased knowledge & skills to support children's health & development
- SYSTEM**
 - Increased availability of parenting education resources & services
- CHILD CHANGES**
 - Increased number and percentage of children who live in safe, stable & supportive families

STRATEGIES

- **Provide information to parents** and facilitate connection to needed services and supports
- **Provide professional development programs,** services and supports for professionals providing information and support to parents
- **Strengthen and sustain** the Washington Parenting Education Network (WAPEN)
- **Develop, promote and implement policies** that will advance Kids Matter strategies and outcomes

RESOURCES

- SYSTEM BUILDING INITIATIVES**
 - ECCS Grant – Dept of Health
 - BUILD Initiative
 - Head Start – State Collaboration Office
- PARTICIPATING SYSTEMS**
 - State & Local Government Partners
 - Coalitions & Associations
 - Foundations and other private funders
- INFRASTRUCTURE**
 - Research and Resources
 - Governance in Washington State
 - Projects and Initiatives
- COMMUNICATION**
 - Children's Web Hub
 - Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies and 211 Information and Referral Lines
 - CHILD Profile
 - Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies
- PARENT LEADERSHIP**
 - Parent leadership is an essential part of high quality services and systems. The goal is to promote this resource for system and/or specific strategies.
- GUIDING PRINCIPLES**
 - Be child-focused and family-centered
 - Recognize that families are children's primary teachers
 - Interact with consideration and respect
 - Be flexible & responsive
 - Build on strengths
 - Provide high quality services
 - Use evaluation to inform decisions
- FUNDING**
 - Leverage public/private resources to move parenting information and support forward

Family Support approach, strategy, or outcome

TABLE 1. KIDS MATTER PARTNERS

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY GROUPS

- Child Care Health Consultants (Nurses in local health jurisdictions statewide)
- Child Care Resources and Referral Network (Managers of local resource and referral networks statewide)
- Family, Friends and Neighbor Care Providers (Community-based family, friends and neighbor care providers in King County)
- Family Support Programs (Statewide network supported by Washington Council for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect)
- Family Advisory Network (Statewide network of parents that guide the work of the Program of Children with Special Health Care Needs)
- Head Start/ECEAP Regional Directors
- Teachers, administrators and parents participating in Summer Institutes (Institutes with statewide participation sponsored by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction)

LOCAL INITIATIVES

- Bright Futures (Whatcom Co)
- CC-CHILD Profile Project (Grant Co)
- Circle of Security (Spokane Co)
- Getting School Ready (King Co)
- Kids Get Care (King Co)
- Northwest Early Learning (Skagit Co)
- Support for Early Learning and Families (Clark Co)

STATE LEVEL STAKEHOLDERS (Advisory Group Members in bold)

- Center for Infant Mental Health (CIMH)
- Comprehensive Health Education Foundation (CHEF)*
- **Department Of Health, Washington State (DOH)***
- DOH Child and Adolescent Health (CAH)*
- DOH Washington Integrated Service Enhancement (WISE)
- DOH Healthy Child Care Washington (HCCW)
- DOH Office of Maternal and Child Health (OMCH)*
- **DSHS – Division of Child Care & Early Learning (DCC&EL)***
- DSHS Infant/Toddler Early Intervention Program (ITEIP)
- DSHS – MAA, EPSDT Improvement Team (Medicaid)
- **Early Childhood Education & Assistance Program (ECEAP)**
- **Family Policy Council (FPC)**
- **Foundation for Early Learning (FEL)***

- Governor's Office – Early Childhood Policy*
- **Head Start-State Collaboration Office (HS-SCO)***
- **Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies (HMHB)**
- Institute for Language and Brain Sciences
- **Leadership Council for Quality Care and Education (LCQCE)**
- League of Education Voters (LEV)*
- **Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)***
- Organization of Parent Education Programs (OPEP)
- Oral Health Coalition
- Statewide Action for Family Empowerment (SAFE-WA)
- Talaris Research Institute*
- University of Washington, School of Nursing (Promoting First Relationships (PFR)), NCAST
- Washington Association for Education of Young Children (WAEYC)*
- **Washington Chapter-American Academy of Pediatrics (WCAAP)**
- **Washington Council for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (WCPCAN)***
- Washington Early Learning and Development Benchmarks
- Washington Association for the Education of Personnel in the Early Childhood Programs (WAEPECP)
- Washington Parenting Education Network (WAPEN)
- **Washington State Child Care Resource & Referral Network (CCRRN)***
- Washington State Fathers Network (WSFN)

FEDERAL EARLY CHILDHOOD INITIATIVES

- Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) – Maternal Child Health Bureau
- Good Start, Grow Smart (GSGS) – Child Care Bureau, Head Start Bureau & Department of Education
- Infant/Toddler Child Care Initiative – National Zero To Three
- No Child Left Behind (NCLB) – Department of Education
- Build Initiative – Early Childhood Funders Collaborative

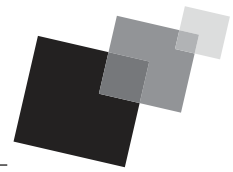
*Build Initiative Partners. Other Build Partners include: *Build Initiative Partners. Other Build Partners include: Parent Teacher Associations (PTA); Local School Districts (e.g., Central Valley in Spokane); National Council of Jewish Women – Seattle Section; Pierce County Libraries; Circle of Success (Yakima, Washington); King County Children and Family Commission; Program for Early Parent Support (PEPS) (King County); Project Lift-Off/SOAR (Seattle/King County); Community-Minded Enterprises (Spokane); The Boeing Company; Children's Home Society (CHS); Economic Opportunity Institute (EOI); Kirlin Foundation; Social Venture Partners (SVP); Washington State Library; Wells Fargo Bank; Early Care and Education Coalition (EC2); Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program (ITEIP); Organization of Parent Education Programs (OPEP); Washington Association for Educators of Personnel in Early Childhood Programs (WAEPECP); Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP Programs; Parent Teacher Associations (PTA); Local School Districts (e.g., Central Valley in Spokane); National Council of Jewish Women – Seattle Section; Pierce County Libraries; Circle of Success (Yakima, Washington); King County Children and Family Commission; Program for Early Parent Support (PEPS) (King County); Project Lift-Off/SOAR (Seattle/King County); Community-Minded Enterprises (Spokane); The Boeing Company; Children's Home Society (CHS); Economic Opportunity Institute (EOI); Kirlin Foundation; Social Venture Partners (SVP); Washington State Library; Wells Fargo Bank; Early Care and Education Coalition (EC2); Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program (ITEIP); Organization of Parent Education Programs (OPEP); Washington Association for Educators of Personnel in Early Childhood Programs (WAEPECP); Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP Programs



KIDS MATTER

FULL REPORT

I. GOALS AND GUIDANCE



A. Mission

The Kids Matter Plan focuses efforts to create sustainable, integrated and accessible early childhood pathways so that parents, families, caregivers and communities throughout Washington State have the information, support and services they need to help young children achieve their greatest potential.

B. Vision

The people of Washington State value children, parents and families. We understand that the well-being of individual families and children is vital to our healthy, educated, economically successful and civil society. We recognize that learning and development begin at birth and that children's experiences prior to kindergarten have significant impact on their school and life success.

We support policies and services which promote children's health and well-being and help them achieve their greatest potential in school and in life. Our early childhood policies, services and supports are effective, efficient and high-quality. We integrate local and statewide efforts to meet the needs of children and families in their communities. We make information and resources readily accessible so that young children and their families can receive support and services which meet their needs.

Our children are ready for school, our schools are ready for our children and our families and communities have the information and services we need to support children's success in school and life. Children and families are the center of everything we do and families readily share their wisdom to assure that our policies and services promote positive outcomes for children and families.

C. Guiding Principles


- **Be child-focused and family-centered.** Promoting the well-being of children and families is the goal of all policies, services and supports.
- **Recognize that families are childrens first teachers.** All pathways and services provide support to families as children’s caregivers and first teachers.
- **Interact with consideration and respect.** Children, parents, families and service providers interact respectfully, with consideration for culture, language, physical and mental abilities, tribal sovereignty, economic status and other unique cultural, community and individual qualities.
- **Be flexible and responsive.** Early childhood services and systems are adaptive, continually responsive to emerging family and community issues.
- **Build on strengths.** Children, parents, families and service providers have unique strengths which are valued and respected.
- **Provide high-quality services.** Services for children and families are integrated, child-centered, family-focused, community-guided, accountable and informed by research and experience.
- **Use evaluation to inform decisions.** Evaluation can provide information to improve quality, communicate impact and make decisions regarding programs, services and policies to positively impact outcomes for children and families.

Early Learning occurs in the context of family and community, encompassing

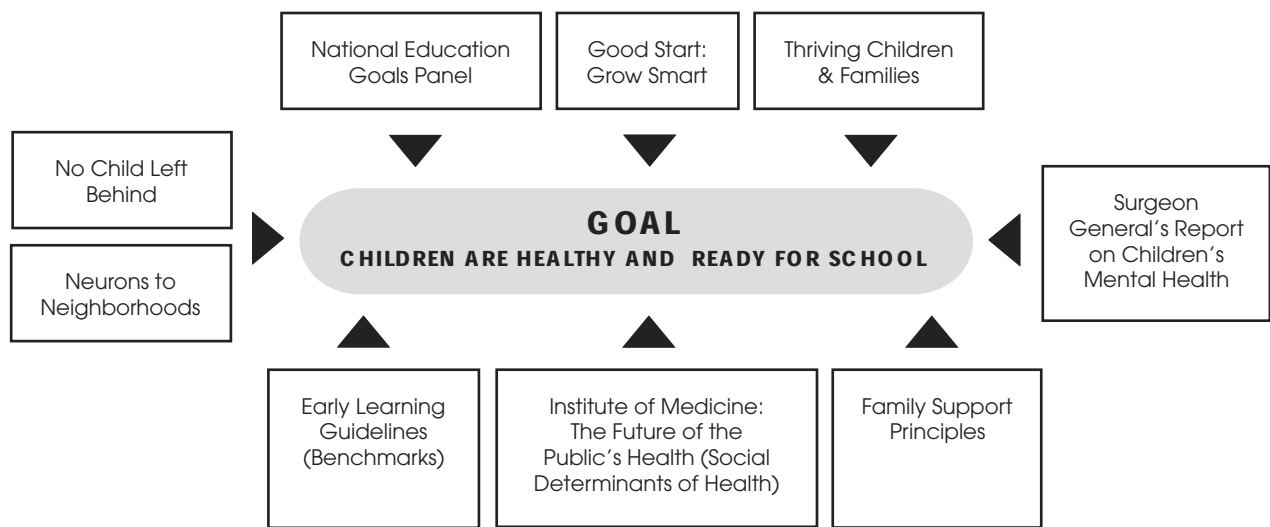
1. Access to Health Insurance and Medical Homes
2. Social-Emotional and Mental Health
3. Early Care and Education/Child Care
4. Parenting Information and Support

Family support cuts across and integrates approaches in all of these areas.

Three statewide system-building efforts came together to create one plan: the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems grant (Department of Health), the Build Initiative (public-private partnership) and the work of the Head Start-State Collaboration Office. Over the past two years, public and private partners in Early Childhood across the state have developed and supported the use of a common plan.

 **Family Support:** Rather than a specific program or service, family support describes an overall approach to strengthening and empowering families and communities to foster the optimal development of all family members.

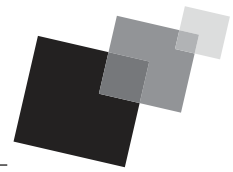
D. Pillars of the Plan



Kids Matter is a plan poised for action. Importantly, this action is grounded in clear and specific outcomes and goals. The plan is intentional, logical and focused on achieving results through best practices. Although conscious decisions were made to make this work stakeholder driven, it is grounded in national and state level research-based information which guided our Theory of Change. Kids Matter embraces best practices in early childhood systems-building, service and program coordination and integration and specific programmatic areas and practices; using them to guide the implementation of The Plan. Kids Matter refers to this work as the "Pillars of The Plan". The "national pillars" represent No Child Left Behind, the National Education Goals Panel, Good Start: Grow Smart, Neurons to Neighborhoods, the Surgeon General's report on Children's Mental Health and the Institute of Medicine's Report – The Future of the Public's Health. The "state pillars" are represented by Washington's Family Policy Council's work regarding Thriving Children and Families, Family Support Principles and Washington's new Early Learning and Development Benchmarks (guidelines). This theoretical framework is the backdrop for the systems-building efforts, collaboration and integration fundamental to Washington's comprehensive early childhood systems plan.



II. PLAN DEVELOPMENT



A. The Development Process

LEADERSHIP, PARTNER PARTICIPATION AND ROLES

Kids Matter is guided by three system-building partners and jointly shared by an extensive group of community, local, regional and statewide stakeholders engaged in early childhood efforts. The system-building partners—the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Grant, the Build Initiative and the Head Start-State Collaboration Office—have shepherded this work and serve as champions for engaging stakeholders and encouraging the use of this framework. Additionally, ORS, a planning and evaluation consulting group, has compiled the needs assessment and facilitated the outcome-based strategic planning.

Numerous stakeholders have participated throughout the development of this process in roles such as an ongoing advisory role, content development for each goal area and input and feedback in the development of outcomes and strategies. These stakeholders have represented local and state initiatives and agencies, public and private organizations, community representatives, as well as the advisory groups for the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Grant, the Build Initiative and the Foundation for Early Learning and the Head Start-State Collaboration Office. Kids Matter is built upon the existing work of stakeholders, e.g., needs assessments, strategic plans and performance measurement plans, and is advised by, reviewed by and prioritized by stakeholders. The following outline describes the Kids Matter development process.

1. FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

An ongoing commitment to outreach and inclusiveness has been one of the hallmarks of the Kids Matter planning process. From brainstorming about the vision to prioritizing outcomes and strategies, Kids Matter planners have maintained relationships with existing partners and have reached out to new partners around the state. Many of the Kids Matter partners have well-established forums and mediums to solicit and use the input of the families most impacted by partners' decisions and service delivery systems. For example, the Program for Children with Special Health Care Needs within the Maternal Child Health Programs has a well-established Family Advisory Network, a stated commitment to involving the families in program planning and policy development and a full-time Family Consultant who takes a lead role in identifying and developing opportunities for families to become involved at the level where they are most comfortable. Additionally, Head Start and the Early Childhood & Education Assistance Program (ECEAP) have well-established values and patterns of operation that facilitate collaboration with families. The Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP has its roots in a Head Start parents' organization and 50% of current members are Head Start or ECEAP parents.

Table 1. Kids Matter Partners

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY GROUPS

- Child Care Health Consultants (Nurses in local health jurisdictions statewide)
- Child Care Resources and Referral Network (Managers of local resource and referral networks statewide)
- Family, Friends and Neighbor Care Providers (Community-based family, friends and neighbor care providers in King County)
- Family Support Programs (Statewide network supported by Washington Council for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect)
- Family Advisory Network (Statewide network of parents that guide the work of the Program of Children with Special Health Care Needs)
- Head Start/ECEAP Regional Directors
- Teachers, administrators and parents participating in Summer Institutes (Institutes with statewide participation sponsored by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction)

LOCAL INITIATIVES

- Bright Futures (Whatcom Co)
- CC-CHILD Profile Project (Grant Co)
- Circle of Security (Spokane Co)
- Getting School Ready (King Co)
- Kids Get Care (King Co)
- Northwest Early Learning (Skagit Co)
- Support for Early Learning and Families (Clark Co)

STATE LEVEL STAKEHOLDERS (Advisory Group Members in bold)

- Center for Infant Mental Health (CIMH)
- Comprehensive Health Education Foundation (CHEF)*
- **Department Of Health, Washington State (DOH)***
- DOH Child and Adolescent Health (CAH)*
- DOH Washington Integrated Service Enhancement (WISE)
- DOH Healthy Child Care Washington (HCCW)
- DOH Office of Maternal and Child Health (OMCH)*
- **DSHS – Division of Child Care & Early Learning (DCC&EL)***
- DSHS Infant/Toddler Early Intervention Program (ITEIP)
- DSHS – MAA, EPSDT Improvement Team (Medicaid)
- **Early Childhood Education & Assistance Program (ECEAP)**
- **Family Policy Council (FPC)**
- **Foundation for Early Learning (FEL)***
- Governor’s Office – Early Childhood Policy*
- **Head Start-State Collaboration Office (HS-SCO)***
- **Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies (HMHB)**
- Institute for Language and Brain Sciences
- **Leadership Council for Quality Care and Education (LCQCE)**
- League of Education Voters (LEV)*
- **Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)***
- Organization of Parent Education Programs (OPEP)

- Oral Health Coalition
- Statewide Action for Family Empowerment (SAFE-WA)
- Talaris Research Institute*
- University of Washington, School of Nursing (Promoting First Relationships (PFR)), NCAST
- Washington Association for Education of Young Children (WAEYC)*
- **Washington Chapter-American Academy of Pediatrics (WCAAP)**
- **Washington Council for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (WCPCAN)***
- Washington Early Learning and Development Benchmarks
- Washington Association for the Education of Personnel in the Early Childhood Programs (WAEPECP)
- Washington Parenting Education Network (WAPEN)
- **Washington State Child Care Resource & Referral Network (CCRRN)***
- Washington State Fathers Network (WSFN)

FEDERAL EARLY CHILDHOOD INITIATIVES

- Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) – Maternal Child Health Bureau
- Good Start, Grow Smart (GSGS) – Child Care Bureau, Head Start Bureau & Department of Education
- Infant/Toddler Child Care Initiative – National Zero To Three
- No Child Left Behind (NCLB) – Department of Education
- Build Initiative – Early Childhood Funders Collaborative

*Build Initiative Partners. Other Build Partners include: *Build Initiative Partners. Other Build Partners include: Parent Teacher Associations (PTA); Local School Districts (e.g., Central Valley in Spokane); National Council of Jewish Women – Seattle Section; Pierce County Libraries; Circle of Success (Yakima, Washington); King County Children and Family Commission; Program for Early Parent Support (PEPS) (King County); Project Lift-Off/SOAR (Seattle/King County); Community-Minded Enterprises (Spokane); The Boeing Company; Children’s Home Society (CHS); Economic Opportunity Institute (EOI); Kirlin Foundation; Social Venture Partners (SVP); Washington State Library; Wells Fargo Bank; Early Care and Education Coalition (EC2); Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program (ITEIP); Organization of Parent Education Programs (OPEP); Washington Association for Educators of Personnel in Early Childhood Programs (WAEPECP); Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP Programs; Parent Teacher Associations (PTA); Local School Districts (e.g., Central Valley in Spokane); National Council of Jewish Women – Seattle Section; Pierce County Libraries; Circle of Success (Yakima, Washington); King County Children and Family Commission; Program for Early Parent Support (PEPS) (King County); Project Lift-Off/SOAR (Seattle/King County); Community-Minded Enterprises (Spokane); The Boeing Company; Children’s Home Society (CHS); Economic Opportunity Institute (EOI); Kirlin Foundation; Social Venture Partners (SVP); Washington State Library; Wells Fargo Bank; Early Care and Education Coalition (EC2); Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program (ITEIP); Organization of Parent Education Programs (OPEP); Washington Association for Educators of Personnel in Early Childhood Programs (WAEPECP); Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP Programs

Recognizing that legitimate and meaningful involvement of parents and community stakeholders is based on relationships and a shared history, the developers of Kids Matter chose to build on the success and experiences of these partner organizations. Because outcomes were the linchpin of the strategic planning approach, particular effort went into soliciting parent and community input on the prioritization of outcomes for the Kids Matter Plan. Seven Kids Matter partners involved their parent and community representatives from around the State in the outcomes prioritization process. Each individual in these various advisory, planning or learning groups weighed in on several of the Early Childhood System elements. Their input was compiled and used to guide outcome choices, strategy selection and the overall direction of The Plan.

2. NEEDS ASSESSMENT/ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

We reviewed and compiled information from numerous documents developed by state and local agencies and initiatives related to strategic plans, needs assessments, performance plans and evaluations systems. The resulting strength and gap analysis has been shared with numerous stakeholder groups and partners, and was used to help shape the content of the outcome identification process.

3. OUTCOME-BASED STRATEGIC PLANNING

We considered outcomes prior to developing strategic directions. We asked: What do we want to achieve in an early childhood comprehensive system, at the system level and the child and family level? The outcomes selected served as the guide for developing an action agenda for the strategic plan and will be open for reconsideration in one to three years as The Plan's effectiveness is reviewed and evaluated. Input, ratings and feedback to arrive at the prioritized outcomes were gathered from a broad mix of early childhood stakeholders, using existing advisory and related stakeholder groups as appropriate. Contributors to this outcomes selection, as well as to various other parts of strategic plan development, are identified in the stakeholder chart above. They reflect high priority and compelling outcomes selected through this statewide participatory process. They are not comprehensive, but are inclusive of priorities that cut across multiple groups of stakeholders who serve the interests of young children.

4. ALIGNMENT WITH KEY PROCESSES AND INITIATIVES

The development process for Kids Matter has deliberately worked to integrate other system-building efforts both internal and external to the Department of Health: Title V OMCH Five Year Needs Assessment; OMCH internal integration work; Healthy Child Care Washington (HCCW), the Build Initiative; the Washington Integrated Service Enhancement (WISE) grant; the Head Start-State Collaboration Office and the Early Care and Education Coalition. Integrating the programs and objectives of HCCW into the Kids Matter Plan has been an effective process. Within the prioritized outcomes, HCCW objectives around quality standards and child care health consultation are called out specifically in the Early Education and Child Care section of the Logic Model. HCCW has effective and ongoing efforts around connecting children with insurance and a medical home and promoting children's social-emotional development and mental health; all of which relate directly to prioritized outcomes in the Kids Matter Plan. Lorrie Grevstad, Washington's ECCS lead, formerly led HCCW; and her commitment to and knowledge of the HCCW system has facilitated the integration of HCCW throughout The Plan.

5. DEVELOPMENT OF VISION, MISSION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Numerous stakeholder advisory groups from local and state agencies contributed to the development of a vision, mission and guiding principles for the strategic plan. The advisory groups for the Foundation for Early Learning, the Build Initiative and Head Start-State Collaboration Office refined this work. The ongoing Kids Matter systems advisory group finalized the wording for these plan components, including representatives from the Division of Child Care and Early Learning; Head Start-State Collaboration Office; Washington State Department of Health; The Foundation for Early Learning; Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies; Organizational Research Services, Inc.; the Early Childhood Education & Assistance Program; the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction; the Washington Association for the Education of Young Children; Washington Council for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect; the Washington Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics; Washington State Child Care Resource and Referral Network and the Washington State Family Policy Council.

6. IDENTIFICATION OF EXISTING STRATEGIES THAT HAVE MOMENTUM

Leads for each goal content area were convened to provide initial information about strategies that currently exist that can influence the prioritized outcomes in the areas of policy development, system changes and programs. These leads represent the following organizations: Washington Council for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect; Comprehensive Health Education Foundation; Department of Health, Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies (Washington Chapter); American Academy of Pediatrics; the Foundation for Early Learning and the Head Start-State Collaboration Office. This initial list provided a starting point for continuing a discussion of the key action areas to include in a strategic plan that are most likely to influence the prioritized outcomes. This in-depth discussion involved approximately 40 stakeholder groups to allow for relevant, strategic input into The Plan's strategy selection.

7. DEVELOPMENT OF A THEORY OF CHANGE "OUTCOME MAP"

Based on stakeholder input throughout The Plan's development, an outcome map was developed that identifies how the strategies and outcomes align toward the achievement of the overall goal: Children are healthy and ready for school. This map will be further developed based on ongoing feedback about relevant strategies and outcomes, in light of existing initiatives, progress on outcomes and external factors that contribute to achieving system level changes.

B. Assumptions and Intentions of the Kids Matter Framework

1. COLLABORATION AND INTEGRATION REQUIRE CREATIVE STRATEGIC APPROACHES

In Washington State, early childhood policies, supports and services reside in a complex system of systems with many parts and shifting, hard-to-predict outcomes. The traditional command-and-control style of planning, systems-building and/or management is ill suited to such a complex system of systems and would inevitably impair our efficacy in terms of creativity and adaptability. Relationships between people and systems are the keys to success in this complex environment. In early childhood systems, people and organizations interact frequently, often inspiring novel ideas. Anything that enhances these interactions will enhance the creativity and adaptability of the systems. Kids Matter offers all of us in early childhood a grounding sense of mutual interest and respect, facilitating our ability to influence each other, even if we do not have equal power in the traditional sense. The realm of “between” is the focus of these integrative efforts, instead of keeping organizational processes and funding streams in their existing silos.

2. SYSTEM AND PARTICIPATING PARTNERS AND ALL STAKEHOLDERS HAVE A ROLE IN KIDS MATTER

Kids Matter anticipates that the System Partners (ECCS, the Head Start-State Collaboration Office and the Build Initiative) will use The Plan’s framework for statewide system-building efforts, and will work to build a multi-partner Kids Matter implementation budget. System Partners will communicate with participating partners about how to use The Plan to promote their specific local or state goals. Participating Partners will contribute to The Plan’s development and seek ways to use The Plan’s framework to advance their specific goals. They will seek opportunities to coordinate with other partners in order to integrate early childhood efforts, using Kids Matter to frame their conversations, efforts and communications but will likely provide detail beyond the content of this strategic plan to address their specific needs. Both System and Participating Partners will serve as “Ambassadors for The Plan.” See “How to Use the Kids Matter Plan” for examples of how partners can use this framework.

3. THE PLAN HAS UNDERLYING INTENTIONS THAT INFLUENCE ITS CONTENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

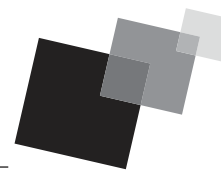
- It reflects **stakeholder input**—participatory and bottom up vs. top-down; grounded in community priorities and infused with best practices
- It reflects the current **unevenness of development in early childhood systems**, resulting in different levels of detail about outcomes and strategies
- It reflects **areas of the system that have momentum**. This contributes to the uneven levels and details but reflects the actual development and strategic opportunities to pursue
- It is **outcome-focused**. It reflects what we hope to achieve in the next three to five years
- It **focuses on integration of systems** at both local and state levels to achieve key outcomes on behalf of young children

4. KIDS MATTER IS PRIMED FOR SUCCESS IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD "SYSTEM OF SYSTEMS" BECAUSE:

- It was developed through a participatory process: people helped create it and own it
- It sets goals and objectives for investment yet it frees individual organizations and communities to find their own best way to meet those goals
- It is a living document versus a fixed long term plan
- It can be the "connective tissue" between pieces of the early childhood system
- It focuses many organizations and agencies toward a common framework, helping us become more efficient and effective (working better and smarter together), and likely more creative in our strategies
- It makes the most of the wisdom of all stakeholders (public and private) in solving some of our problems
- It allows us to collaborate and plan globally so that we can act locally, reflecting our individual organization or community needs and strengths
- It puts a common goal and results in the center of what we do, allowing leaders at all different levels to make a difference, and know they made a difference for children



III. ASSESSMENT OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD ENVIRONMENT



Needs Assessment: An Environmental Scan

Recognizing that the Kids Matter strategic planning process was occurring alongside the planning processes of multiple state and local agencies, initiatives, associations and service providers working in the early childhood arena, the methodology of this environmental scan was designed to build upon and integrate those existing efforts. In early 2004, researchers from Organizational Research Services (ORS) conducted an extensive review of the planning documents of over 25 different entities engaged in early childhood system assessment and integration activities in Washington State. Materials from state agencies, private foundations, current initiatives, professional associations and key city and county jurisdictions were included in the review. A list of most of the entities included is presented in Table 2 below.

TABLE 2: SOURCES OF MATERIALS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

STATE AGENCIES/ENTITIES:

- Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Early Childhood Education and Family Literacy
- Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development, Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP)
- Washington State Department of Social and Health Services:
 - Division of Child Care and Early Learning (DCCEL)
 - Governor's Head Start-State Collaboration Office
- Washington Council for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (WCPCAN)
- Washington State Department of Health, Office of Maternal and Child Health (OMCH)
- Washington State Family Policy Council
- The Leadership Council for Quality Care and Education (LCQCE) (formerly known as the Child Care Coordinating Committee)

STATEWIDE FOUNDATIONS, ASSOCIATIONS AND INITIATIVES:

- Early Care and Education Coalition (EC²)
- Foundation for Early Learning (FEL)
- League of Education Voters (LEV)
- Parenting Matters Foundation
- Washington Association for the Education of Young Children (WAEYC)
- Washington Build Initiative
- Washington Parenting Education Network (WAPEN)
- Washington State Child Care Resource & Referral Network (CCR RN)

Continued on next page

RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS:

- Economic Opportunity Institute (EOI)
- University of Washington
 - Center on Human Development and Disability
 - Washington Kids Count (School of Public Health and Community Medicine and Human Services Policy Center)

KEY LOCAL AND REGIONAL INITIATIVES:

- Health Improvement Partnership Spokane, Spokane Regional Child Care Initiative
- Northwest Finance Circle of Seattle/King County and Spokane, Project Lift-Off/SOAR
- Public Health—Seattle & King County, Neurons to Neighborhoods
- United Way of King County, SOAR

In addition to capturing and categorizing information about each of the identified areas (Medical Home, Mental Health/Social Emotional Development, Child Care/Early Childhood Education, Family Support and Parenting Education), reviewers focused on data and conclusions related to the overall early childhood system. To support and inform the planning process, reviewers analyzed the planning documents and categorized the conclusions regarding strengths and gaps, summarized below. Another product of the environmental scan was an extensive list of the outcomes desired by the various integration and systems-building efforts around the state. Using this list of outcomes, summaries of systems and service delivery strengths and gaps and their own perspectives and experiences, individuals representing a broad spectrum of those interested in early childhood systems across the state participated in the prioritization and focus of the Kids Matter Plan.

It is clear from these numerous documents and this lengthy list of offices, groups and organizations that there is great interest in and attention to early childhood issues in Washington State. It is also clear that some areas (for example, child care and early childhood education) have recently received a great deal of attention and have inspired a great deal of review and planning. Others (family support and parent education) have received less attention from statewide planning and action efforts in recent years and therefore appear less often in the documents reviewed. This summary, therefore, contains greater detail in some areas than others, reflecting the level of development and attention around these areas in recent years.

EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM GAPS AND STRENGTHS

System Gaps: Four overarching Early Childhood System Gaps emerged from the document review:

1). Fragmentation — Multiple, Separate Systems: There are multiple early childhood care and education programs at the state level, each with their own infrastructure, chains of accountability, data collection and reporting, funding streams, eligibility criteria and leadership. Four distinct state agencies and three legislatively created bodies contributed their separate early childhood planning and assessment documents to the review. In some areas, different agencies offer similar or overlapping services. In others, a single service is split between agencies. A 2000 review found that the current organizational structure is perceived as complex and fragmented and that it lacks core leadership.¹

2). Funding Gap — State and federal programs lack funding to serve all young children eligible for early childhood programs. Head Start programs serve just over 7,000 four-year olds in Washington State, while almost 16,000 four-year olds live under the federal poverty level.² Families struggle and many are unable to pay for high-quality child care for their young children. A two-parent family, with both parents working full-time for the minimum wage (\$21,424 a year before taxes), would spend 31 percent of their income on center-based child care for one child at the market rate in an urban area.³

3). Challenges to Focused Policy Guidance — No single entity holds the authority and/or expertise for even one, much less all five, of the broad components of early childhood systems. Fragmentation and a lack of coordination and collaboration across the different service, information and policymaking entities, often produces information for decision-makers that lacks focus, integration and a sense of priority.

4). Lack of Public Understanding of the Importance of Early Childhood and Early Childhood Services and Systems — Parents, caregivers and the general public are unaware of key information about early brain development and the implications for policies and programs impacting young children and their families. A 2000 survey of parents and caregivers of young children in Washington State showed an awareness that early brain development is important, but also revealed serious gaps in knowledge. For example, 53% of respondents believed that more caregivers were better for a child's development; and 30% believed that if basic health and safety needs were met, everything else would take care of itself.⁴

¹ "Child Care and Early Learning Organizational Study," Office of Financial Management, State of Washington, December 2000

² Based on 2002 data, cited in the Head Start, Early Head Start and Early Childhood Education and Assistance Programs in Washington State, State Profile 2001-2002; Governor's Head Start-State Collaboration Office, Department of Social and Health Services, Division of Child Care and Early Learning, Lacey, Washington

³ Children's Defense Fund, "Washington Early Childhood Development Facts" March 2005

⁴ Washington Early Learning Commission, 2000. See: www.digitalarchives.wa.gov/governorlocke/early/home1.htm

System Strengths: Reviewers categorized many strengths identified by the various planning efforts and documents included in the scan. The matrix, Table 4 on the following page, lists several of the activities that were identified as strengths at the time of the environmental scan and indicates which of the major gaps are addressed by those initiatives. While some specific projects and initiatives (particularly those related to proposed legislation or funding proposals) can change significantly over time, these broad areas of strength informed the Kids Matter planning process in 2004 and 2005.

Specific Service and Outcome Areas: Gaps and Strengths

The following is a summary of the gaps and strengths identified in the various planning documents for each area. Reviewers found that gaps were often revealed through population level data (particularly in the Medical Home and Mental Health/Social and Emotional Development areas) and in planners' conclusions about system and service gaps (in the areas describing services and practices such as Child Care/Early Education, Parenting Education and Family Support). The strengths were more likely to be articulated in the areas of promising services, policy commitments and informational and institutional resources.

MEDICAL HOME

GAPS:

1). Inadequate Immunization Rates — In Washington State between 2000 and 2001, there was a decrease in the percentage of two-year olds that were fully immunized from 72.6% to 66.8%.⁵ The 2002 National Immunization Survey estimated that vaccination coverage for all children in Washington State aged 19-35 months was 69.2%, less than the national 2001 rate of 74.8%.

2). Lack of Access to Health Care — 39% of children entering ECEAP had not received a well-child exam within one year.⁶ Limited access to dental care results in about 21% of 2nd-3rd graders with untreated decay. Rates of decay for one and two-year-olds were substantially higher than for the US as a whole.⁷

3). Lack of Health Insurance for Children — 14% of Washington State children were uninsured in 2002.⁸

STRENGTHS: Strengths in the area of Medical Home focused on successes in health outcomes, health care access and system strengths. For example, children in ECEAP show much higher than average levels of insurance coverage and immunization.⁹ In 2001, 83.2% of Washington state pregnant women entered prenatal care during the first trimester of pregnancy.¹⁰ Statewide systems, such as Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies and local programs, such as King County's Kids Get Care, have successfully increased access to health care and medical home for children and families.

⁵ "The State of Washington's Children," Winter 2003; University of Washington Human Services Policy Center

⁶ ECEAP Cumulative Summary of Demographic Characteristics Program Year 2002

⁷ Washington's SMILE Survey, 2001

⁸ 2002 Kids Count Databook, Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2002

⁹ JBA Outcome study "highlights," ECEAP

¹⁰ "Maternal and Child Health Data Report," Washington State Department of Health, Maternal and Child Health Assessment, December 2003

TABLE 3: EFFORTS STRENGTHENING WASHINGTON'S EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM

Activities and Status	Gaps Targeted by this Activity:			
	Fragmentation	Funding Gap	Unfocused Policy Guidance	Public Lacks Understanding
Early Care and Education Coalition (EC ²) – a coalition of organizations that fund services for young children and their families. Formed in 2002, the EC ² is working to build public awareness and improve policy and funding for early care and education in Washington State.			X	X
Washington State Early Learning and Development Benchmarks – a set of early learning standards that specify what young children should know and be able to do at critical stages of development between birth and entry to kindergarten. A review draft was released at a large public meeting of diverse stakeholders in November 2004. Over 2,000 individuals have informed the process.	X		X	X
Washington Build Initiative – a group of public and private partners joined together to lead the state's Build Initiative. Currently a "Learning Partner" of the national initiative, Washington Build is a system partner for the Kids Matter Plan.	X	X	X	X
Head Start-State Collaboration Office (HS-SCO) – was created by the Governor in 1996 to develop and maintain the capacity to support multi-agency and public/private partnerships and collaborations to enhance services to children and families and to influence policies affecting the Head Start population. HS-SCO is a system partner for the Kids Matter Plan.	X		X	X
Governor's Early Childhood Commission – a 1998-2000 effort focused on Early Learning, involving key public and private stakeholders. The Foundation for Early Learning emerged as a leader for these efforts.	X	X	X	X
Division of Child Care and Early Learning (DCCEL) – This DSHS division of state government was created to improve the quality, availability, accessibility and early learning aspects of child care. DCCEL pursued a planning process that included community representatives from around the state.	X	X	X	
Legislative Focus on Early Childhood Systems – Several proposals in recent years indicate the legislature's interest in improving early care and education systems. (In 2003-2004 biennium, HB1545, HB2780 and HB2101 all focused on early care and education systems. Recently passed, HB1152 established an Early Learning Council in the Governor's office.)	X	X		
A solid base of public will – The scan revealed a promising level of energy and public interest in the subject of early childhood and brain development. For example, two recent voter initiatives contained specific emphases on early care and education. A 2000 initiative, I-728, passed with over 70% of the vote. In 2004, I-884's tax increase for education failed, but galvanized support across the state, was influential in the Kids Matter planning process, and created a sense of urgency to address educational funding concerns.		X		X

MENTAL HEALTH/SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

GAPS:

1). Late or Missed Identification and Diagnosis — In Washington State, an estimated 30,000 children ages 6-11 and more than 40,000 adolescents ages 12-17 have symptoms of severe emotional and behavioral problems.¹¹ Despite the demonstrated benefits and savings of early intervention, only 28.7% of children in elementary school special education programs were identified as having a developmental delay before they were five-years-old.¹²

2). Lack of Access to Mental Health Care — Problems in accessing mental health services for children and youth are reported throughout Washington State. In a preliminary needs assessment, community pediatricians across the state indicated they desire better tools for assessment and easier access to refer patients to child psychiatrists.¹³ An inadequate number of mental health providers limits access to those with adequate financial means and health insurance, while those with limited means and/or those using public health insurance programs face still greater hurdles.

STRENGTHS: Strengths in this area focused on the *state's commitment to high-quality services* to children with mental health or other special health care needs, *powerful resources* in the state such as the University of Washington Center on Infant Mental Health and Development and the UW's "Promoting First Relationships" curriculum and training, and *promising local initiatives* such as the From Neurons to King County Neighborhoods project.

EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION/CHILD CARE

GAPS: Gaps in public awareness and the system fragmentation in our state are described above. The scan revealed an additional four major gaps in child care and early education services for families.

1). Lack of and/or Loss of Funding Negatively Impacts Quality — Low wages for child care providers and early childhood educators diverts highly qualified individuals to other professions and contributes to high turnover rates in early education and child care settings. (Average hourly wage for preschool teachers is \$9.43, child care providers \$7.42, and kindergarten teachers \$24.51.)¹⁴

2). Lack of Funding Negatively Impacts Access and Affordability — Only 19% of those eligible receive integrated subsidy programs for child care.¹⁵ As noted above, high-quality child care is beyond the means of many working families in Washington State.

11 Washington DOH "What's Up" Fact Sheets; <http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/adolescenthealth.htm>

12 "Developmental Surveillance and Screening Monitoring to Promote Optimal Development" (PowerPoint); May 11, 2004, Utah Consortium. Dr. Katherine TeKolste, UW Center on Human Development and Disability.

13 Medical Home Leadership Network, University of Washington

14 Early Care and Education Coalition, Report on Strategy, January 16, 2004

15 "Strategic Planning Summary Statement for ECEAP" 2004

3). Families Lack Access to Quality Care, Particularly Infant/Toddler and Non-Standard Hours Care

— 45% of all requests to child care resource and referral agencies were for infant and toddler care.¹⁶ 59% of women with children under the age of three in Washington are in the labor force.¹⁷ Several planning documents recognize that the number of non-standard hours workers is increasing due to the growing service economy and that the demand for child care for those families is increasing as well.¹⁸

4). Inconsistent or Absent Definitions of Quality and a Fragmented Early Learning Infrastructure Negatively Impact the Quality of Care

— The Foundation for Early Learning identified several aspects of model early care and education definitions lacking in Washington State, such as ideal ratios, environments, and teacher credentials, and standards for Family, Friends and Neighbor Care parenting information and support.

STRENGTHS: Identified strengths in this area included the momentum to develop and implement standards, benchmarks and guidelines, the movement toward stronger links between early childhood education and K-12, and numerous local action agendas around school readiness.

PARENTING INFORMATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT

GAPS: While relatively few documents reviewed in the scan specifically addressed “family support,” stakeholders in the planning process determined later that family support principles and the practices, approaches and policies they imply should be reflected throughout all programs and systems serving children and their families. Parenting education and information are one type of service available to support families. The initial environmental scan revealed three areas of need under family support and parenting information and education.

1). Not All Families Needing Services are Targeted — Prevention and early intervention efforts are targeted primarily at low-income families.

2). Existing Services and Supports Often Inadequately Serve Families — Due to service location, lack of cultural relevance or competence, service hours, model and/or focus, programs often do not reach or fully support families.

3). Lack of Funding Focusing on Prevention — The majority of funding is applied to intervention in the areas of child out-of-home placement, youth incarceration, treatment for serious and persistent mental illness and treatment for substance abuse.

4). Parenting Education Is Often Underutilized and Inaccessible — Parenting education programs are often under-publicized and are not accessible to all parents.

¹⁶ Child Care Profile, United States/NACCRRA, March 2003

¹⁷ Ibid.

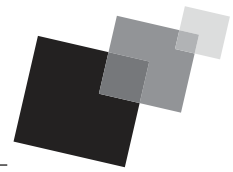
¹⁸ Washington Child Care Resource and Referral Report; Washington Child Care Coordinating Committee (now “Leadership Council”), and DCCEL.

STRENGTHS: Identified strengths in this area included an administrative and policy *commitment to the concepts of Family Support* (Washington has codified the concepts of Family Support into state law and two state agencies are particularly focused on Family Support); *programs* devoted to or significantly incorporating Family Support (Early Head Start, ECEAP and between 80 and 100 family support centers around the State provide services related to family support, such as home visiting, support groups, information and referrals and parent education; CHILD Profile mailings reach the parents of every child born in the state with parenting and other early childhood information). The Washington Integrated Service Enhancement Grant, a federal grant, is an example of the State's particular progress in the area of family support for parents of children with special health care needs. Finally, the Washington Parenting Education Network is a resource to Parenting Educators and strives to increase quality and expand access to parenting education.

The strengths and gaps identified above are summaries of the broad themes identified with clarifying examples. This summary is not intended to be a comprehensive list of the data available or of the programs and initiatives occurring in Washington State.



IV. STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN



Kids Matter is poised for action. Importantly, this action is grounded in clear and specific outcomes and goals. Kids Matter is intentional, logical and focused on achieving results.

While this document strives to be inclusive of various viewpoints, it is also a plan that reflects the coming-together of many stakeholders committed to making hard choices about what must happen next, what is achievable and what has “legs,” or momentum, that can carry the early childhood agenda forward.













The Plan’s framework is described in the **“logic model”** chart that follows. This format is a planning and evaluation tool that builds a plan that is logical, aligned and outcome-focused. Logic models are intended to provide a series of **“If-Then”** statements. Our plan’s assumption is as follows: **IF** we gather key resources (See Resource Column), **THEN** we can implement key strategies and action areas (See Strategies and Action Areas). And **IF** we implement key strategies and action areas, **THEN** we can achieve these core outcomes for children, families, caregivers and the systems that support and serve them (See Outcomes column). And **IF** we achieve these core outcomes, **THEN** we can achieve our **GOAL** that Children are Healthy and Ready for School.

The Kids Matter logic model is presented in four pages. The resources which are needed to carry out this Plan encompass many categories and are presented in more detail in pages which follow the logic model. The strategies which are listed on the logic model are further explained by way of examples in the pages that follow as well. The logic model provides a clear picture of the outcomes and strategies associated with each goal area, and how they collectively contribute to the overall goal, that children are healthy and ready for school. The pages which follow provide a deeper understanding of what each area of systems development might entail.

While the logic model offers an opportunity for a tightly focused plan, the implementation is broad and inclusive. Kids Matter invites partners and stakeholders to implement various strategies that build upon their unique strengths, work plans and missions to support the achievement of these common outcomes. Stakeholders have identified several of these strategies in the development of The Plan. The resources (partners, infrastructure, etc.) that are identified below are some of the key building blocks for this framework, with the hope and intention that more blocks will be added as Kids Matter is implemented. Additionally, the strategy examples that follow, are intended to be illustrative and not exhaustive.










In addition to this chart, the framework is also portrayed in visuals that offer another way to view Kids Matter. First we offer a pyramid representation of the framework. Second, we offer a “theory of change” map that shows the framework in a holistic diagram.

A. Logic Model

Resources	Strategies/ Action Areas	Outcomes
<p>System-Building Initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ECCS Grant–Department of Health ■ Build Initiative ■ Head Start-State Collaboration Office <p>Participating Systems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ State and Local Government Entities ■ Coalitions and Associations ■ Foundations and Other Private Funders <p>Infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Research and Resources ■ Infrastructure in Washington State ■ Projects and Initiatives <p>Communication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Children’s Web Hub ■ Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies and 211 Information and Referral Lines ■ CHILd Profile ■ Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies <p>Parent Leadership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Parent Leadership is an essential part of high-quality services and systems. The goal is to promote this resource for system and/or specific strategies  	<p>A. ACCESS TO HEALTH INSURANCE AND MEDICAL HOMES</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Increase awareness among all who care for young children about the importance of comprehensive health care 2) Enroll more eligible children in public health insurance programs (Medicaid, SCHIP, Basic Health, SSI)  3) Facilitate access to a Medical Home for all children (including medical, dental, mental health, vision and hearing services)  4) Make developmental assessment and referral to early intervention accessible  5) Develop, promote and implement policies that will advance Kids Matter strategies and outcomes 	<p>Parent and Caregiver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increased understanding of the importance of comprehensive health care (including medical, dental, mental health, vision and hearing)  ■ Increased ability to recognize an emerging issue with their child’s health or development and connect with appropriate services  <p>System:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increased number and percentage of children who have medical insurance <p>Child Changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increased number and percentage of children who receive recommended preventive care (e.g., well-child, immunizations) ■ Increased number and percentage of children who have access to comprehensive health care (including medical, dental, mental health, vision and hearing)
	<p>B. SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Ensure that communications with all who work with young children emphasize the importance of social, emotional and mental health  2) Promote existing programs’ awareness and implementation of models of services and supports for young families that are effective, culturally competent and community-based  3) Promote existing programs’ awareness and implementation of practices that provide opportunities for social connectedness for families  4) Promote caregivers’ knowledge of social, emotional and mental health of young children  5) Promote collaboration among policymakers, providers and other stakeholders 6) Develop, promote and implement policies that will advance Kids Matter strategies and outcomes 	<p>Parent and Caregiver:</p> <p>Improved understanding and practice of nurturing behaviors to promote children’s optimal social-emotional development and mental health </p> <p>System:</p> <p>Increased availability of appropriate and coordinated mental health services for children </p> <p>Child Changes:</p> <p>Increased number and percentage of children entering kindergarten with social-emotional skills</p>



Family Support approach, strategy, or outcome

Resources	Strategies/ Action Areas	Outcomes
<p>Guiding Principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Be child-focused and family-centered ■ Recognize that families are children's first teachers ■ Interact with consideration and respect ■ Be flexible & responsive ■ Build on strengths ■ Provide high-quality services ■ Use evaluation to inform decisions <p>Funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Leverage public/private resources to move the early childhood systems agenda forward ■ New Governor's Early Learning Council to make funding recommendations ■ Legislature approved funding quality-rating & tiered reimbursement pilots, with statewide option 	<p>C. EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION / CHILD CARE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Use Washington State Early Learning and Development Benchmarks as a tool to enhance the quality of child care and early learning 2) Improve the ability to evaluate and reward high-quality programs through development of Quality Rating System (QRS) and Tiered Reimbursement 3) Promote children's health in early care and education programs (Ongoing statewide collaborative effort: Healthy Child Care Washington - HCCW) 4) Support high-quality professional development services and opportunities for caregivers 5) Develop capacity within the early care and education systems to engage in family support 6) Expand access to high-quality pre-school experiences 7) Develop, promote and implement policies that will advance Kids Matter strategies and outcomes 	<p>Parent and Caregiver:</p> <p>Increased understanding of what children need for optimal health and development (physical, social-emotional, cognitive and language) </p> <p>System:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increased number and percent of child care and preschool programs that are quality rated  ■ Increased wages for quality child care providers ■ Increased systems' recognition of families' role as the primary nurturers of their children  ■ The public sees early childhood education, health and school readiness as a major contributor of academic success and economic growth ■ Improved ability of families to obtain quality child care and preschool programs that meet families' needs  ■ Increased availability of community resources & support networks for families and caregivers  <p>Child Changes:</p> <p>Increased number and percentage of children entering kindergarten healthy and ready for school, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. physical well-being, health and motor development 2. social and emotional development 3. approaches toward learning 4. cognition and general knowledge 5. language, communication and literacy
	<p>D. PARENTING INFORMATION AND SUPPORT</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Provide information to parents and facilitate connection to needed services and supports  2) Provide professional development programs, services and supports for professionals providing information and support to parents  3) Strengthen and sustain the Washington Parenting Education Network (WAPEN) 4) Develop, promote and implement policies that will advance Kids Matter strategies and outcomes 	<p>Parent and Caregiver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increased stress-reduction skills  ■ Increased knowledge and skills to support children's health and development  <p>System:</p> <p>Increased availability of parenting education resources and services</p> <p>Child Changes:</p> <p>Increased number and percentage of children who live in safe, stable and supportive families</p>

B. Resources

Resources include:

SYSTEM-BUILDING INITIATIVES:

- Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) Grant – Department of Health
- Build Initiative
- Head Start - State Collaboration Office

PARTICIPATING SYSTEMS:

State and Local Government Entities:

- Community Trade and Economic Development
- Department of Child Care and Early Learning (DCCEL)
- Department of Health
- Department of Social and Health Services
- Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP)
- Family Policy Council
- Head Start-State Collaboration Office (HS-SCO)
- Leadership Council for Quality Care and Education (LCQCE)
- Office of Maternal and Child Health (OMCH)
- Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)
- Washington Council for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (WCPCAN)

Coalitions and Associations:

- Early Care and Education Coalition
- Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Coalition of Washington State
- Washington Association for the Education of Young Children (WAEYC)
- Washington Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (WCAAP)
- Washington State Child Care Resource & Referral Network (CCRR)

Foundations and Other Private Funders:

- Comprehensive Health Education Foundation (CHEF)
- Foundation for Early Learning (FEL)

INFRASTRUCTURE:

Research and Resources:

"Building an Early Learning System: The ABC's of Planning and Governance Structures" Bruner, Charles et al published in December 2004 describes goals and processes associated with governance structures for early learning, offers some rules of thumb for planning and provides extensive information about state and early childhood structures in all 50 states. The full text is available at www.finebynine.org

Infrastructure in Washington State:




Because of the multiple domains of early childhood development and the variable levels of structure and authority associated with programs and services for young children and their families, a successful infrastructure is a system of systems that is adaptable, flexible and able to meet the needs of children and families.

Projects and Initiatives:

The issue of governance in Washington State is increasingly significant, given recent activity, interest and collaborative efforts focusing on supporting the development of young children. Examples of collaborative (public and private) efforts to work toward common goals that have a child focus, with families front and center include:

- **Washington Early Learning Council** Recently passed legislation creates the Washington Early Learning Council that will "provide vision, leadership and direction to the improvement, realignment and expansion of early learning programs and services for children birth to five years of age... build upon existing efforts and recommend new initiatives, as necessary, to create an adequately financed, high-quality, accessible and comprehensive early learning system that benefits all young children whose parents choose it." (From HB 1152(s2) available at www.leg.wa.gov)
- **Early Care and Education Coalition** A coalition begun by a group of organizations that fund services for young children and their families that is actively engaged in building public awareness, improved policy and funding for early childhood education. (www.earlyeducationcoalition.org)
- **Washington State Early Learning and Development Benchmarks** A description and framework of the skills, knowledge and approaches to learning that contribute to children's success in school and life. (<http://www.governor.wa.gov/earlylearning/>)

COMMUNICATION:

- **Children's Web Hub.** A coordinated effort to deliver consistent messages about early childhood and to mobilize the action of supporters
- **Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Information & Referral Line** Support HMHB line and ensure that 211-information line meets the unique needs of families with young children 
- **CHILD Profile** 
- **Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies** 
- Implement communication between providers to integrate services which improve outcomes
- Implement strategies to engage the public in support of plan efforts to improve outcomes

 Family Support approach, strategy, or outcome

PARENT LEADERSHIP:

Parent Leadership is an essential part of high-quality services and systems. The goal is to promote this resource for system and/or specific strategies

Examples include:

WISE Family Advisory Network A Family Advisory Network guides the work of the program for Children with Special Health Care Needs as they develop recommendations to increase the integration of the services available for children ages 0-8 with special health care needs and their families. Members of the Family Advisory Network come from different parts of the state and are the parents of children with diverse diagnoses of special health care needs.

Head Start Head Start integrates parent leadership throughout the program, including making individual decisions about children, educational opportunities, decision-making and leadership of local programs and regional policy councils.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

- **Be child-focused and family-centered.** Promoting the well-being of children and families is the goal of all policies, services and supports.
- **Recognize that families are children's first teachers.** All pathways and services provide support to families as children's caregivers and first teachers.
- **Interact with consideration and respect.** Children, parents, families and service providers interact respectfully, with consideration for culture, language, physical and mental abilities, tribal sovereignty, economic status and other unique cultural, community and individual qualities.
- **Be flexible and responsive.** Early childhood services and systems are adaptive, continually responsive to emerging family and community issues.
- **Build on strengths.** Children, parents, families and service providers have unique strengths which are valued and respected.
- **Provide high-quality services.** Services for children and families are integrated, child-centered, family-focused, community-guided, accountable and informed by research and experience.
- **Use evaluation to inform decisions.** Evaluation can provide information to improve quality, communicate impact and make decisions regarding programs, services and policies to positively impact outcomes for children and families.

FUNDING :

- Leverage public/private resources to move the early childhood system agenda forward
- Recently created Governor's Early Learning Council is charged to make recommendations concerning "stable and sustainable funding" for early learning programs and services
- Recently passed legislation specifically funds development of a quality-rating and tiered reimbursement system in two pilot sites (to be implemented statewide, subject to the availability of amounts appropriated by the legislature for this specific purpose)

C. Strategies/Action Areas:

A. ACCESS TO HEALTH INSURANCE AND MEDICAL HOMES

1) Increase awareness among all who care for young children about the importance of comprehensive health care

Examples include:

- CHILD Profile mailings: a statewide system which sends personalized letters to families prior to each recommended well-child checkup during the first 6 years of life
- HCCW (Healthy Child Care Washington): Child Care Health Consultants (CCHC's) work with child care providers and parents to increase awareness of and connection to a medical home
- Bright Futures: A collaborative project between the Department of Health and the University of Washington to promote the effective use of Bright Futures tools to increase awareness about and effectiveness of preventive care services for children

2) Enroll more eligible children in public health insurance programs (Medicaid, SCHIP, Basic Health, SSI)

Examples include:

- Health Care Coalition for Children and Youth (HCCY) works to effect policy to facilitate insurance coverage and health care access for all children
- Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Coalition of Washington (HMHB) provides a statewide toll free number where information and referral specialists help connect children and families to insurance programs

3) Facilitate access to a Medical Home for all children (including medical, dental, mental health, vision, and hearing services)

Examples include:

- Early & Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) improvement project at the Medical Assistance Administration (MAA): a collaborative project to promote access to quality preventive services for young children in the Medicaid program
- Kids Get Care: a King County project to connect children to comprehensive medical, dental and mental health services; expanding in a statewide Collaborative

Medical Home: A medical home is not a building, but rather a team approach to providing comprehensive primary health care services in a high-quality and cost-effective manner.

4) Make developmental assessment and referral to early intervention accessible

Examples include:

- Medical Home Leadership Network (MHLN): a collaboration between University of Washington, DOH-program for Children with Special Health Care Needs (CSHCN), and local communities to support recognition of children with special needs, connect them to early intervention and promote primary care practitioners' ability to care for this population effectively
- Snohomish County Pilot population based developmental screening and early intervention project: A partnership between (MAA, CHILD Profile, MHLN and local health department) to assess parental concerns via a standardized tool, and connect children and families with the Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program (ITEIP) as appropriate, linking back to their medical home

5) Develop, promote and implement policies that will advance Kids Matter Strategies and Outcomes

B. SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

1) Ensure that communications with all who work with young children emphasize the importance of social, emotional & mental health

Examples include:

- Provide "emotion coaching" information to parents such as the partnership between Dr. Gottman, Talaris Research Institute and CHILD Profile to mail information directly to parents
- CHILD Profile mailings teach about ways to promote social-emotional development
- Washington State's Early Learning and Development Benchmarks have a section devoted to social-emotional development

2) Promote existing programs' awareness and implementation of models of services and supports for young families that are effective, culturally competent and community-based

Examples include:

- "Bringing Baby Home" Program: (Gottman) connected with Swedish Hospital in Seattle works with parents to support their relationship while adjusting to parenthood
- Parenting Partnership connected with Mary Bridge Hospital in Tacoma works with the families of doubly vulnerable infants (infants who are at biological risk due to premature birth and who come from low-income families) and employs programs and strategies such as NSTEP-P (Nursing Systems Toward Effective Parenting – Pre-term) and STEEP (Steps Toward Effective, Enjoyable Parenting)
- Circle of Security Intervention developed in association with the Marycliff Institute in Spokane is a group-based intervention designed to improve patterns of attachment between high-risk caregivers and the children in their care

3) Promote existing programs' awareness and implementation of practices that provide opportunities for social connectedness for families

Examples include:

- *First Steps* pilot projects (Department of Health) aimed at increasing and maintaining social supports for the pregnant and parenting women served by the First Steps program (support for Medicaid covered births)
- *Clark College Child and Families Studies Program* offers part-time and full-time child care in conjunction with parenting classes and family support

4) Promote caregivers' knowledge of social, emotional and mental health of young children

Examples include:

- *Center on Infant Mental Health at University of WA:* Trains providers to support young children and families through Graduate Certificate Program in Mental Health; enhances research base by studying infant-parent relationships in Birth to Three Research Laboratory
- *Promoting First Relationships* - a prevention program dedicated to promoting children's social-emotional development through responsive, nurturing caregiver-child relationships. Child Care Health Consultants (through HCCW) use this program to help train providers in the use of practical, effective strategies for promoting secure and healthy relationships between caregivers and young children (birth to 3 years)
- *Family, Friend and Neighbor Caregiver Resource Network (FFN)* – King County: A collaborative project of six community-based organizations developing a system of resources and support to family, friend and neighbor caregivers

5) Promote Collaboration Among Policymakers, Providers and other stakeholders

Examples include:

- *Partnerships for Supporting Children's Mental Health* – a collaborative effort among diverse public and private stakeholders to disseminate information about successful outcomes in children's mental health
- *Improving Systems of Care:* Working together to ensure effective systems, such as assuring that assessment strategies include social, emotional and mental health and that outcomes are measured, reported and used as a tool for improvement, such as through efforts of Washington Council for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (WCPCAN) and Healthy Child Care Washington (HCCW)

6) Develop, promote and implement policies that will advance Kids Matter Strategies and Outcomes.

C. EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION / CHILD CARE

1) Use Washington State Early Learning and Development Benchmarks as a tool to enhance the quality of child care and early learning

Examples include:

- Incorporate and embed Benchmarks into existing professional development systems: STARS, TEACH
- Incorporate Benchmarks into early childhood education programs: e.g. 2- and 4-year institutions

Quality Rating and Tiered Reimbursement: The Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) model includes assessment and technical assistance/coaching to help child care providers and their programs attain higher levels of quality in their services. A quality rating system gives parents information about the quality of centers and family homes in their communities, helping them select the best option for their children.

Tiered Reimbursement is a monetary incentive added onto the base subsidy reimbursement rate for child care providers who demonstrate that they are working toward or provide higher quality care.

Linking the rating with the quality improvement services and with tiered-reimbursement focuses resources on improving child care for low income families as well as encouraging providers to accept subsidized children.

2) Improve the ability to evaluate and reward high-quality programs through development of Quality Rating System (QRS) and Tiered Reimbursement

Initiatives include:

- A tiered reimbursement pilot project in Spokane
- Integrated tiered reimbursement and quality rating system being developed in King County
- Legislation that creates such a system for the state recently passed (HB1152)

3) Promote children's health in early care and education programs (Ongoing statewide collaborative effort: Healthy Child Care Washington - HCCW)

HCCW initiatives include:

- Partnerships between Child Care Health Consultants and caregivers to enhance the health and safety of the care setting and to promote children's physical and emotional health
- Dirt Alert Campaign to heighten awareness about how environmental contaminants can impact children
- Hand in Hand training for caregivers working with children impacted by substance abuse at home

4) Support high-quality professional development services and opportunities for caregivers

Examples include:

- Create a statewide plan which supports, connects and aligns efforts into a comprehensive system of professional development and education
- Build on existing professional development efforts, such as T.E.A.C.H. and STARS. The Teacher Education and Compensation Helps program offers scholarships to licensed child care centers and family child care providers. STARS is designed to increase opportunities for basic and ongoing training for providers
- Facilitate articulation of programs between and among 2- and 4-year institutions to support a continuum of professional education opportunities
- Increase knowledge and access to resources for all caregivers. For example, the King County Child Care Resources has received funding from the Foundation for Early Learning to provide training and technical assistance to 20 community organizations that have regular contact with and/or resources that could benefit Family, Friends and Neighbors (FFN) caregivers and to help them integrate service to FFN caregivers into their existing operations

5) Develop capacity within the early care and education systems to engage in family support

Examples include:

- Engage parents, develop parent leadership and provide or link to supports for families
- Support provider capacity through trainings such as Promoting First Relationships, Calming Ourselves in Stressful Moments, Hand in Hand DASA (Department of Alcohol and Substance Abuse) training and the Special Needs Project (enhanced services for families of children with special needs)
- Engage in family support efforts such as Play and Learn Groups, FFN Caregiver Groups and caregiver workshops in collaboration with community center and other community based organizations, such as the efforts of the members of the Family, Friend and Neighbors (FFN) Caregiver Resource Network

6) Expand access to high-quality pre-school experiences

Examples include:

- Expand availability of publicly funded preschool slots: Expand ECEAP program through legislative action
- Register public and private preschools: Consider registration to better understand current capacity, connect families to available programs and provide opportunities to ensure high-quality programs

7) Develop, promote and implement policies that will advance Kids Matter Strategies and Outcomes

D. PARENTING INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

1) Provide information to parents and facilitate connection to needed services and supports.

Examples include:

- CHILD Profile mailings: a statewide system which sends personalized letters to families prior to each recommended well-child checkup during the first 6 years of life, providing information about ways to promote children's health and development, and where to turn for more information and support
- Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Coalition of Washington (HMHB) provides a statewide toll free number where information and referral specialists provide information about child health and development, and facilitate connection to needed supports such as insurance programs, health care resources, child development and early intervention programs, and food and nutrition support

2) Provide professional development programs, services and supports for professionals providing information and support to parents

Examples include:

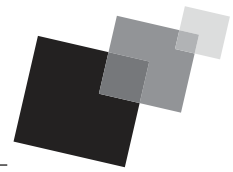
- Provide training opportunities to those supporting parents, such as C.H.E.F. Trainings in "Healthy Beginnings", "Social Beginnings" and "Calming Ourselves in Stressful Moments"
- Connect with parents through child care settings, such as "Making Parenting a Pleasure" provided through Healthy Child Care Washington Child Care Health Consultants
- Provide forums for learning and networking, such as Annual WSU Parenting Conference, WAPEN and other list serves

3) Strengthen and sustain the Washington Parenting Education Network (WAPEN)

4) Develop, promote and implement policies that will advance Kids Matter Strategies and Outcome



V. EVALUATION PLAN



APPROACH TO EVALUATION. Kids Matter will be evaluated on three levels:

- **Level 1.** Implementation of Strategic Plan Level (Process)
- **Level 2.** Systems Change Level (Systems Outcomes)
- **Level 3.** Child and Family Change Level (Child and Family Outcomes)

These levels reflect the systems-building and systems-integration approach of the Kids Matter Plan. **Level 1**—Implementation of The Plan (Process)—addresses the importance of collaborative and integrated adoption of multiple system and participating partners, at both the state and local levels, to a collective vision, mission, outcomes and goals. There is no centralized authority governing this Plan. It is based on the collective will to work comprehensively and intentionally toward a common purpose. The evaluation of the extent to which this occurs will assess the progress this Plan makes in moving from paper, to action, to creating real changes in the lives of young children. **Level 2**—Systems Change—addresses the theory-of-change of comprehensive early childhood systems that the behavior of systems directly impacts children's health and school readiness. Systems that work in coordination and collaboration in their approach to programs and policies are far more likely to create positive changes than those that work independently in silos. **Level 3**—Child and Family Level Changes—addresses the *raison d'être* for a strategic plan. Kids Matter intends to affect system changes *so that* children and families experience positive outcomes.

EVALUATION PLAN

Kids Matter has developed an evaluation plan that is practical, economical and feasible in its approach to data collection. Kids Matter views its primary focus as systems integration and will focus its evaluation resources on primary data collection about the implementation of the systems plan and system level changes (Levels 1 and 2). It will leverage its partner resources by drawing upon existing data sources, and work toward cultivating additional data sources, for measuring child and family level outcomes (Level 3). There is a significant amount of data currently available that address these outcomes, and during the early years of implementation of this Plan, there will be a concerted effort to further develop the availability of data sources related to Kids Matter outcomes. The broad partnerships developed during the planning process have facilitated the capacity to leverage these current and potential sources of data as The Plan's partners are aware of the evaluation needs related to this strategic plan. These partners have begun consideration of these evaluation needs in their own data collection agendas (e.g., Title V OMCH Assessment, CHILD Profile Parent Survey, OSPI Kindergarten Readiness Survey).

DATA COLLECTION ELEMENTS AND METHODS

The Kids Matter primary data collection methods for evaluating The Plan implementation process and system outcomes (Levels 1 and 2) will include surveys, interviews, content analyses, and partner tracking logs. The system partners, goal area leads and systems advisory group will regularly complete a collaboration tracking log that will provide valuable data about the extent, quality, scale and outcomes of collaboration occurring in relation to the Kids Matter Plan. This ongoing reflection about collaboration will provide real-time feedback about how to strengthen coordination and use of The Plan to advance both the system-level and child-level outcomes. Topics covered on the tracking log include: 1) Name or Type of System-Building Collaboration, 2) Participants in the Collaboration, 3) Level of Collaboration (information sharing; coordination of existing activities or services, creation of new activities or services); 4) Intended or achieved results of collaboration and how these relate to the Kids Matter Plan (strategies or outcomes); 5) Barriers or facilitators to this collaboration and achievement of Kids Matter outcomes.

At a state level, content analysis of budgets and legislation will provide additional sources of data regarding systems change. Surveys of community partners, such as Head Start/ECEAP directors and Public Health Nursing Directors, will offer community level systems change data.

Tables 4 through 7 that follow outline the intended outcomes, indicators, data sources and data collection methods.

A. Level 1 — Implementation of the Strategic Plan

Level 1 of the evaluation focused on the extent to which this Plan moves from paper to action. Kids Matter will only be an effective plan to the extent that there is awareness of The Plan, adoption of The Plan, evidence of the positive influence of The Plan and accountability to the outcomes of The Plan.

TABLE 4: LEVEL 1

Outcomes	Indicators	Data Sources and Data Collection Methods
Increased implementation of The Plan among system & participating partners as evidenced by: a. Degree of awareness of The Plan b. Degree to which Plan elements are applied c. Degree to which The Plan is perceived as positively influencing systems-building efforts d. Degree to which The Plan is perceived as positively influencing children and family outcomes among system and participating partners e. Degree to which system and participating partners are using outcome measures identified in The Plan	Number of system and participating partners that: a. Reference the Kids Matter Plan in their strategic plans and work plans b. Have used Kids Matter in their approach to policy and program development and implementation c. Can describe positive impacts on systems that are identified as Kids Matter Plan elements d. Can describe positive impacts on children and families that are identified as Kids Matter Plan elements e. Are collecting data and reviewing results related to outcome measures identified in Kids Matter	Biannual tracking of partners' plan implementation and outcomes using tracking log Annual review of content analysis of legislation and system and participating partners strategic plans and work plans

B. Level 2 — Systems Change Level

Each of the systems outcomes listed in The Plan’s logic model is important to track in this evaluation. To recap, these outcomes are:







1. Increased number and percentage of children who have medical insurance
2. Increased availability of appropriate and coordinated mental health services for children 
3. Increased number and percent of child care and preschool programs that are quality rated 
4. Increased wages for child care providers
6. Increased ability of families to obtain quality child care and preschool programs that meet families’ needs 
7. Increased availability of community resources and support networks for families and caregivers 
8. Increased availability of parent education resources and services
9. Increased system recognition of families’ role as the primary nurturers of their children* 
10. The public sees early childhood education, health, and school readiness as a major contributor to economic growth* 

TABLE 5: LEVEL 2







Outcomes	Indicators	Data Sources and Data Collection Methods
<p>Changes in system level policies and practices as evidenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Level of collaboration among system partners b. Adoption of policies that support Kids Matter outcomes c. Increases in public spending that support Kids Matter outcomes d. Increases in private or philanthropic spending that support Kids Matter outcomes e. Increased availability of community resources that support Kids Matter outcomes, see 1 – 10 above. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Self-report of degree of collaboration that promote Kids Matter outcomes among system and participating partners b. Number of policy statements that align with Kids Matter c. Amount of public funds dedicated to strategies that support Kids Matter outcomes d. Amount of philanthropic giving dedicated to strategies that support Kids Matter outcomes e. Number of communities that have increased availability of resources and services that support Kids Matter outcomes 	<p>Biannual tracking of collaboration using tracking log</p> <p>State budget analysis</p> <p>Survey of partners regarding public and private grants that support Kids Matter outcomes</p> <p>Survey of community representatives (e.g., Public Health Nursing Directors, Head Start Directors, Child Care Resource & Referral Network) about availability of community resources and services that support Kids Matter outcomes</p> <p>Content analysis of legislative bills and votes</p> <p>Child Care Resource & Referral Network Survey (ongoing existing survey)</p> <p>CHILD Profile Survey (ongoing existing survey)</p>

*Note: Two of the system outcomes identified in the Kids Matter Plan remain a work in progress for the evaluation. During implementation of this Plan, efforts will be made to develop evaluation data collection sources and methods to assess progress in these areas.

 Family Support approach, strategy, or outcome

C. Level 3 — Child and Family Change Level (Child and Family Outcomes)

Each of the child and family outcomes listed in The Plan’s logic model is important to track in this evaluation. As mentioned above, these outcomes will be measured, to the extent possible, with existing data sources. To recap, these outcomes are:

1. Increased parent and caregiver understanding of the importance of comprehensive health care 
2. Increased parent and caregiver ability to recognize an emerging issue with their child’s development and connect to appropriate services 
3. Increased number and percentage of children who have medical insurance
4. Increased number and percentage of children who receive recommended preventative care
5. Increased number and percentage of children who have access to comprehensive health care
6. Improved parent and caregiver understanding and practice of nurturing behaviors to promote children’s optimal social-emotional development and mental health 
7. Increased number and percentage of children entering kindergarten with social-emotional skills
8. Increased understanding of what children need for optimal health and development 
9. Increased number and percentage of children entering kindergarten healthy and ready for school
10. Increased parents’ and caregivers’ stress reduction skills 
11. Increased parents’ and caregivers’ knowledge and skills to support children’s health and development 
12. Increased number and percentage of children who live in safe, stable and supportive families

There are currently a number of data sources that address some or many of these outcome areas. Additionally, as described earlier, Kids Matter will work with partners in early childhood efforts to modify or expand their current data collection efforts to more fully capture these outcomes. For example, the National School Readiness Indicators Initiative, A 17-State Partnership sponsored by the David and Lucille Packard Foundation, Kauffman Foundation and the Ford Foundation, offers a national research-based model of school readiness indicators that can be tracked. Efforts will be made to encourage partners to incorporate these indicators in their existing data collection efforts. Current sources of data that will be considered for measurement are as follows:

TABLE 6: LEVEL 3

Source	Outcomes Addressed
<p>Title V Department of Health Office of Maternal and Child Health (DOH) Notes: Data sources include State Population Survey, SMILE survey, National Child Health Survey, HCCW Evaluation, PRAMS data base, CPS CAMIS data, and US Census.</p> <p>CHILD Profile Parent Survey and Immunization Registry Notes: CHILD Profile is the Washington State health promotion system and immunization registry. Statewide survey administered every few years. Different versions provided to parents based on age-group of child from birth to age 6.</p> <p>Office of the Superintendent for Public Instruction (OSPI) Kindergarten Readiness Survey Notes: Survey developed and administered in 2004 to a statewide sample of kindergarten teachers. Plans in process for repeated surveys.</p> <p>Early Development Instrument (EDI) Notes: This population-based measure of school readiness is currently implemented in several schools in King County, Washington.</p> <p>Head Start and ECEAP Evaluations Notes: These federal and state early childhood programs collect annual performance data. For example, the community level data and Program Information Report are collected annually and reported biannually in a State Profile Report published by the Head Start-State Collaboration Office.</p>	<p>3,5,6,9,12</p> <p>1,4,8,9,12 and potentially 6</p> <p>9</p> <p>9</p> <p>3,5,7,9</p>

OPPORTUNITIES FOR STRENGTHENING DATA COLLECTION AND USING OUTCOME DATA TO STRENGTHEN THE SYSTEM

Opportunities for cultivating further data sources will be pursued during the implementation of The Plan. Some of these opportunities will likely include:

- Title V OMCH Block Grant will be assessing which additional data to collect as a result of their strategic planning and meeting the prioritized needs that emerged from the five-year needs assessment and planning process
- CHILDP Profile has surveyed parents about their satisfaction with the health promotion materials. This is a potential venue for adding some additional questions about parent awareness, attitudes and behavior
- The Early Learning Council was just established in the current session of the Washington State Legislature and will develop system goals, objectives and strategies (in concert with existing system-building efforts, such as Kid Matter) and will most likely develop evaluative processes to align with this system planning
- Major strategies identified in this document are committed to undertaking evaluations of these strategies, such as the Early Learning Benchmarks and the Early Care and Education Coalition
- The ELOA grant awarded to five counties in northwest Washington State will be collecting school readiness data. Kids Matter will collaborate with local and regional partners, such as this ELOA initiative, to engage them in sharing their data related to these outcomes and to reflect on the system issues that would strengthen Kids Matter early childhood outcomes in their communities

HOW THESE DATA WILL BE ANALYZED, USED FOR SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT, AND COMMUNICATED

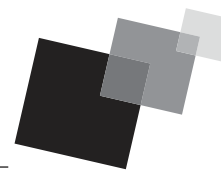
Process and system data will be summarized annually and shared with partners in a work session retreat for discussion, reflection and action planning. The broad base of the Kids Matter Planning effort has created the foundation for regular coordination and communication across participating partners. Reflection and learning should become a regular part of the partnership work sessions that take place during the implementation phase so that the partners can continually focus on the progress that is occurring as well as system gaps, weaknesses and fragmentation.

The premise of Kids Matter is that a statewide system that is integrated, accessible and supported by policies and financing is essential to children's health and school readiness. It is therefore important for system and participating stakeholders at the state and local levels to keep a continual eye on how well these system level outcomes are progressing and to identify any actions that will further facilitate this progress. By evaluating Kids Matter around the use of The Plan, partners will focus on 1) the strategic effectiveness of the coordinated and collaborative approach to systems work; 2) the prioritized outcomes; and 3) the degree to which early childhood stakeholders can effect system level changes.

The evaluation summary will also create a platform to assess the extent to which the Kids Matter Plan has been relevant to early childhood systems change efforts, providing an opportunity to re-assess the timeliness and continued relevance of The Plan in the light of shifting conditions and strategic opportunities. The child and family outcome data (Level 3) will be summarized and communicated annually in a community-friendly, report-card-style format to help maintain awareness of the health and school readiness status of children in Washington State. These report cards can be broadly disseminated and used strategically to help influence policy changes; to attract public and private investments and to expand the availability and integration of resources for early childhood, both at local and statewide levels. Currently, the Head Start-State Collaboration Office publishes a bi-annual Profile Report for children and families served by Head Start and ECEAP. This report may potentially be expanded to incorporate the Kids Matter child and family outcomes.



VI. FINANCING AND SUSTAINABILITY



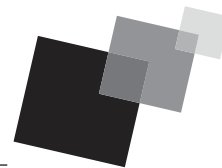
Financing a system that supports children to be healthy and ready for school is a long term goal of Kids Matter. Financing a 'system of systems' will however require a 'virtual' emphasis on efficiencies and integration, while building on existing efforts. Like the overall 'organization' of Kids Matter, financing and sustainability must address both the overall 'systems organizing framework' as well as the 'systems component work,' each requiring different types of capacity building and partnerships. The following table outlines multiple strategies related to financing and sustainability of Washington's Early Childhood System. The Kids Matter Plan is a tool to bring together people and organizations with common goals; to reduce

TABLE 7

Two Processes	Systems Organizing Framework and Support	Service Capacity Building Framework and Strategies
Description	"Systems" efforts to facilitate collaborative, integrated system planning, implementation and evaluation	"Systems" efforts to build the capacity of an effective early childhood system which includes the five key areas of ECCS
Goals	Facilitate development of a statewide EC system	Facilitate capacity building of services within the system
Financing and Sustainability Efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Build Kids Matter budget across system partners ■ Build on UW-Health Services Policy Center's (HSPC) model for financing early learning, pilot tested in 4 states. ■ Build on private sector exploration of financing methodologies that support early learning in the context of 'whole child' and family support ■ Leverage new Early Learning Council (ELC) charged to create an adequately financed, high-quality, accessible, comprehensive early learning system ■ Leverage Governor's legislation creating an Education Finance study of the educational continuum of early learning, K-12, and Higher Ed ■ Leverage ECEC efforts to increase public & political will to improve policies & fiscal support for early childhood ■ Identify additional points of leverage for Title V programs with external EC stakeholders, public & private 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Leverage new ELC's leadership for improvement, alignment, & expansion of services for children 0-5yr, & piloting of a quality rating & tiered reimbursement system for CC & EL ■ Leverage new Mental Health funding due to Parity legislation passed in 2005 legislature ■ Build on Governor's Executive Order to return to 12 month eligibility review cycles to keep more than 19,000 children on Medicaid health coverage ■ Leverage Medical Home Leadership Project to broader EC stakeholder groups ■ Leverage ECEC efforts to increase private sector support for parenting resources for all parents ■ Build capacity of CHILD Profile and HMHB's re: provision of parenting info on child development & early learning ■ Leverage resources/programs across the 6 sections of OMCH/Title V for expanded EC capacity & integration



VII. HOW TO USE THE KIDS MATTER PLAN



fragmentation of systems and services; to provide clear, prioritized policy guidance to decision-makers and to contribute to programs, services, schools and communities that support families and their children.

Developers of Kids Matter hope that it will facilitate a collective understanding of the direction of needed changes in early childhood systems and services and guide decision-making among stakeholders. There is no single or specific model for how to use the framework. Rather, individuals and organizations are encouraged to use it as a resource that fits with their priorities, resources and timing. The Plan can help stakeholders move forward in a simple, efficient and transparent way. Planning and processes with no visible outcomes are frustrating and ultimately ineffective. By drawing on this framework, organizations, agencies and communities can avoid 'reinventing the wheel' and quickly move forward with strategic planning and implementation in a focused and collaborative manner.

Examples of how the Kids Matter framework can be used:

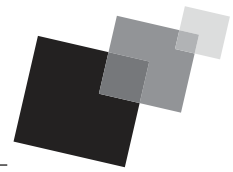
- To Facilitate Collaboration— encourage local collaborative processes with 'action' outcomes; seek opportunities to increase alignment and integration, reduce duplication of efforts and maximize resources
- To Define Outcomes— define desired community or organizational outcomes; and connect with the system, family and caregiver and child outcomes in The Plan
- To Establish Priorities and Focus—decide which opportunities a particular organization will pursue; identifying activities and priorities that naturally align with the prioritized outcomes in The Plan
- To Define Strategic Directions—assess possible strategic opportunities that fit the mission and budget of an organization, agency or community
- To Coordinate Timing—guide agency/organizational action by setting the pace for implementation and execution of newly accepted strategic initiatives
- To Facilitate Exits—identify ways to determine when to end activity that has achieved its goal, or no longer appears strategic

Ideally, diverse stakeholders will "see themselves" in Kids Matter and see how best they can use it to advance their efforts, achieve their priorities and connect with local and state efforts. The following examples illustrate some possible specific actions that The Plan could guide.

A **Legislator** can identify a strategy that needs legislative action to move forward, such as expanding Medicaid eligibility. **State Level Decision-makers** can identify agency or organizational actions that are needed to align funding streams, integrate program resources and create policies to produce and support effective collaboration and system integration. A **Foundation** can choose one or more outcomes, such as increased availability of parenting information resources and services, and use it to guide funding priorities. **Researchers** can contribute to the knowledge base linking strategies to outcomes, by, for example, identifying models of services for families of all cultures that contribute to increasing the social and emotional skills of young children. **Local Decision-makers** can use Kids Matter to guide local systems integration and service planning efforts, such as the regional Northwest Early Learning Network's use of The Plan's outcomes and framework as a basis for regional planning. **Community programs and services** can use this framework to see how they fit into a statewide effort to support children's development, and to align their program outcomes with those identified for parents and children in Kids Matter. **Policy Advocates** can use the Kids Matter framework as a starting place for selecting priorities, a source of common language for communicating with decision-makers, and a tool to communicate with legislators. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, **Families** can use Kids Matter to glimpse the systems behind the services they use and add their voices to the ongoing development and formation of early childhood systems in Washington State. In view of the collective vision and the absence of centralized authority of this Plan, it may best be viewed as



VIII. CONCLUSION



a “primer” coat for guiding the action of early childhood partners. In house painting, the primer or prime coat is not the finished surface. A room with a primer on the walls is not the completed image we want to create. But it creates the conditions for a smoother application of the other coats of paint, for a deeper or richer color, and a more coherent and consistent finish. The Kids Matter Strategic Plan is not the finished product per se. Ideas and concepts are mentioned but only given a quick brush stroke in this primer. The Kids Matter Plan is a framework and planning primer for individual organizations, agencies and communities. They can apply other coats of paint/planning, for a deeper or richer color/plan that better reflects their needs and strengths.

Kids Matter represents the commitment of a broad spectrum of knowledgeable and powerful stakeholders to a shared vision of the future in which our children are ready for school, our schools are ready for our children and our families and communities have the information and services we need to support children’s success in school and life. The specific resources, strategies and interim outcomes will change over time. The Plan serves as a tool to coalesce around our vision and advance toward the enduring goal: Children Are Healthy and Ready for School.

Kids Matter belongs to all interested stakeholder groups and organizations who believe that working collaboratively toward common goals and outcomes will lead to greater success than is possible by working alone.

We thank the many organizations and individuals that have contributed to the Kids Matter framework. Support for the Kids Matter framework planning process was provided by:

Foundation for Early Learning

Washington Build Initiative

Washington State Department of Health/Office of Maternal Child Health
Head Start-State Collaboration Office

Organizational Research Services (ORS) and Jill Sells, MD facilitated the development and writing of the Kids Matter framework.

www.earlylearning.org/kidsmatter.html